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Marine Fisheries Advisory
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Marine Fisheries will host a public hearing on Draft Addendum IV to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Lobster on November 5th. Details of the meeting are included below:

November 5, 2003; 7:00 PM
Holiday Inn, Fairhaven
110 Middle Street
Fairhaven, Massachusetts

The following is information included in a recent press release by ASMFC on Addendum IV. This press release can be viewed by visiting the ASMFC website at www.asmfc.org and includes information on other public hearings to be held throughout the Northeast:

In August, the Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum addresses stock declines in Area 2 (waters off of Rhode Island and Massachusetts), and includes changes to Area 3 management measures (offshore waters), some vent sizes, and the interpretation of the most restrictive rule.

"This is an ambitious Addendum covering a number of complex and difficult issues," stated Board Chair George Lapointe of Maine. "Public comment will be a particularly important component of this process, given that the measures being considered for Area 2 will be incredibly tough because of the condition of the resource. The Commission is committed to providing adequate public input and working cooperatively with Area 2 fishermen to rebuild the lobster resource in this region."

Recent stock information indicates lobster abundance in Area 2 has dropped substantially from the late 1980s and early 1990s, with 2002 abundance significantly below the 20-year average for all sizes of lobsters. From 1999 to 2001, landings from inshore and offshore waters of Massachusetts and Rhode Island declined 26 and 29 percent below the ten-year average, respectively.

Based on this information, the Draft Addendum presents a suite of options to reduce Area 2 landings to allow for stock rebuilding. These include effort control, closed seasons, quotas, gauge size increases, and a maximum size.

The Draft Addendum also outlines an Area 3 Lobster Conservation Management Team (offshore waters) proposal to reduce traps in 2007 and 2008, as well as a trap transferability program. Additionally, the Draft Addendum proposes a change to the circular vent size from 2 1/2 inches to 2 5/8 inches to be compatible with a 2-inch rectangular vent size. Lastly, the Board moved forward with a proposed modification to the interpretation of the most restrictive rule for multi-area fishermen. The Board will meet in December in New York City to take final action on this Addendum.

Copies of the Draft Addendum can be obtained from the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org or by contacting the Commission office at (202)289-6400. Public comment will be accepted until November 26, 2003, and should be forwarded to Carrie Selberg, American Lobster Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC, 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax); or <cselberg@asmfc.org>. For more information, please contact Carrie Selberg at (202)289-6400.